

CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

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Second Letter from the Northern Bishops to President Horvath.

On February 21st the Archbishops of Sweden and Finland and the Bishops of Copenhagen, Danmark, and Oslo, Norway, sent another letter to the leader of the Hungarian Government's Office for Church Affairs, President János Horvath, in which some of the allegations in Horvath's reply to the first letter from the Bishops are refuted and a new appeal is made to the President regarding the Bishops Ordass and Turoczy. The Bishops' second letter reads as follows:

"With deep disappointment we note that your letter of February 1st confirms the events which have caused such great dismay everywhere in the Christian world and which were the reason for our first communication of January 14th.

For anyone outside Hungary it would be difficult to judge about the accusations directed by you against "certain church leaders" of being "selfish ecclesiastics" if those persons had been somebody otherwise not known at all. But we may assure you, Mr. President, that Lajos Ordass and Zoltan Turoczy are such well-known and undisputed personalities in Christendom, men who have proved themselves to be witnesses of faith in word and sacrifices of suffering, that a characterization like the one above is not credible.

If situations arise in which such men cannot but turn "stiff-necked" and must reject certain steps of church policy demanded of them, then we feel convinced that they do so in order to safeguard interests which are indispensable to any true Evangelical church.

It is generally known that the extremely generous subsidy mentioned by you as a proof that the situation has improved does not apply to the diocese of Bishop Ordass because he "has refused to co-operate in the solution of important matters" as you yourself has said elsewhere. We fail to understand such use of economic reprisals against a man and a church who act from the deepest sense of spiritual responsibility.

As regards the reference to interference by the State in Church matters in other countries, particularly in the Northern

countries, we should like to make the following clear:

Firstly: In the Northern countries the part played by the State in appointing men to Church offices rests on a legal system recognized by the Church. In Hungary, on the other hand, the "positively inclined legislation" mentioned by you is a State decree enforced upon the Church.

Secondly: It is not correct that the King (President) in the Northern countries appoints the bishops "at will". In Sweden, Finland and Denmark the Head of the State is limited to certain candidates nominated by the Church. And also in Norway, where the King theoretically is given a freer hand, the Government as a rule follows the nomination made by the Church. Even in an exceptional case as the one mentioned by you the appointment was clearly within the boundaries of the Church Order approved by all instances concerned and took place only on the recommendation by a majority of the Bishops. In the Northern churches it is an indispensable presupposition for maintaining the connection with the State that the latter abstains from putting political pressure on the Church and from interfering in her internal affairs. We should like to remind you of how the Norwegian Church broke with the Nazi State authorities during the War for this very reason.

Thirdly: We should like to point out that our letter was not aimed at the policy of church appointments in Hungary, but at the degradation and removal, respectively, of two bishops who had stood fast upon the freedom of the Church. It is an irrefutable fact that in Hungary a legally elected bishop has been sentenced and removed from office by the State authorities, thereupon rehabilitated and re-installed in office, only to be degraded once more - because he was not willing, off hand, to contribute to what the State terms "constructive solutions". And this the fate of Bishop Ordass has its equivalent in that of Bishop Turoczy.

In the face of such violations of fundamental Christian principles it is impossible to remain silent. The Church is aware of its indispensable integrity and solidarity. Therefore, we cannot but with deep anxiety share in the sufferings of a sister Church going through such tribulations. And, therefore, we beg of you once more, Mr. President, to do all in your power to remove these improper conditions and to create such conditions that will make possible the unhampered activities of the faithful servants of the Church."

Like the first letter, the second one is signed by the Archbishops Yngve Brilioth and Ilmari Salomies and the Bishops H. Fuglsang-Damgaard and Johannes Smemo.

Northern Conference on Films in the Service of Evangelization.

Around March 1st the leaders in charge of the film work of some of the biggest mission societies in the Northern countries met at Stavanger, Norway, for a 4-day conference at which the use of films in the service of evangelization was discussed, both in regard to the work at home and on the mission fields.

Northern Bishops' Conference in August.

On the invitation of the Swedish Bishops' Conference all the Northern bishops from the Lutheran National Churches are to meet at Rättvik, Sweden, from August 12th - 18th. The Northern Bishops' Conferences which take place every third year are of a confidential and unofficial character. The Conference in 1955 was held in Norway.

DENMARK

The Greifswald Cathedral Choir Refused Visés.

The famous East German Cathedral Choir from Greifswald which should have started on a concert tour to various Danish towns at the beginning of March was refused exit permits by the East German Government and the concerts planned for the Choir had to be cancelled at a moment's notice. The Cathedral Choir was invited by the Church of Denmark Council on Inter-Church Relations. Three years ago the Cathedral Choir visited Denmark on a similar tour and at that time the concerts were received with great enthusiasm while, at the same time, the visit meant a strengthening of the ties between the Danish and the East German Churches.

The Council on Inter-Church Relations will now investigate the possibilities of arranging a concert tour at a later date.

The First Youth Minister in Denmark.

As a result of active efforts by local people the little Sealand town of Høng has appointed the first special youth minister in Denmark. It is true that officially the Danish National Church has no ministry especially directed at work among young people and, consequently, the title of the youth minister is also only that of "assistant curate"; but his main task will be the work among the large number of young people attending the many schools of various kinds in the town.

It was the local rural dean who conceived the idea and made the parish council so interested in the matter that not only did they go in for the appointment of a youth minister, but they also had a building, inherited by the parish council, re-fitted as a "Young People's House" with accommodation for clubs and study circles and also living quarters for the minister. Many local artisans have offered their services free.

The first youth minister to be appointed is the 27 years old Rev. Carl Blom who has been employed in Copenhagen for about a year where he and his wife, a trained hobby club leader and social worker, have been in charge of a youth club run by the church.

Refugium and Church to be Erected From Granite Boulders on the Jutland Heath.

The main work project to be undertaken by the ecumenical work camp planned by the World Council of Churches to take place from July 4th to August 3rd in Denmark will be the erection of a stone church on the Jutland heath, viz. in Sønder Lem, north of Skjern. Here the vicar of Lerup-Tranum, Rev. Hakon Rabjerg, owns quite a

big piece of moorland and with the help of his wife and several volunteers he has put up a camp hut with 14 sleeping berths which is used as a religious refugium under the name of "Holy Cross Retreat". Next to this building the vicar has begun the erection of a church, built from granite boulders like most Danish churches from the early Middle Ages. It is the completion of this church which will constitute the main work project of the ecumenical camp. During the camp session and also when the Retreat is in use the old prayers at the canonical hours will be read three times a day.

Proposal for New Service-Book Published.

The Liturgic Committee set up by the Bishops in the Lutheran National Church has now published a draft proposal for a new service-book, consisting of prayers and texts to be used at church services throughout the ecclesiastical year. The Liturgic Committee, headed by Bishop Halfdan Høgsbro, has been occupied with this work for several years and another 3-4 years may be expected to pass before the service-book is authorized.

The proposal includes a revision of the collects from 1546 by Veit Dietrich which have been used up till now and at the same time a suggestion is made for a new series of collects which on the whole follow the old missal collects from around year 400. The Committee has, furthermore, worked out a proposal for a third series of texts for Scripture readings taken from the Old Testament and sermon texts from the Gospels for all the Sundays and Holy Days throughout the Church year. Up to now there has been only two series of texts, to be used alternately every second year, but in the other Northern counties there are three series of texts. The choice of texts for the third series has necessitated certain alterations in the two former series of texts, although only very few have been made in the 1. series which is common to all the Northern churches. The Committee suggests that the sermon texts of the 1. series should be used every second year, while the texts from the 2. and 3. series should be used only every fourth year. As regards the church year it is suggested, amongst other things, that there should be a fixed last Sunday in the church year with appointed texts; that a fifth Sunday in Lent should be re-introduced and Lady Day, which hitherto has been celebrated on this Sunday, should be moved to the Sunday between March 22nd and 28th, though not later than the fifth Sunday in Lent.

The contents of the draft proposal will now be tried out in practice before any decision is made concerning its possible authorization.- The Bishops have, furthermore, charged the Committee with the task of trying to draw up a proposal for a revision of the order of service so that uniformity might be achieved, if possible, between the order of service used in South Jutland and the one used in the rest of the country.

Foreigners at Danish Folk High Schools.

In latter years many Danish folk high schools have admitted foreigners as students and several schools make a point of arranging special courses for foreigners. Thus the Christian folk high school in Haslev ("Den udvidede Højskole") on Sealand, whose Headmaster is Johannes Magelund, will conduct a special ecumenical course for women during the summer of 1958. It is intended for young women

between 18-40 years of age and the instruction will be given in German during the first months. The curriculum will include such subjects as Bible knowledge, dogmatics, ethics, literature, psychology, as well as English and Scandinavian languages, needlework, training of instructors in gymnastics, swimming and volley-ball. Amongst other things, the course aims at training the students for active participation in the life of their respective churches and particular importance is placed on inter-course and talks between the foreign and the Danish students at the school. The school offers both a 3-months' and a 5-months' course, both of them beginning on May 3rd, and the charge will be the same as at other folk high schools, i.e. app. 130 DM (or Sw.frs.) per month. From November 3rd a similar 5-months' winter course will be held for both young men and women.

FINLAND

Preparations for the Convocation of the Church of Finland Next Autumn.

The Convocation of the Finnish Lutheran Church which is to begin on October 1st has occupied the minds of people for some time already. The 42 clergymen and 67 laymen who are to take part in the Convocation were nominated last month at meetings throughout the various dioceses. Moreover, all the Bishops are ex officio members, and a number of higher courts, the theological and law faculties as well as the church administration each send their representatives, so that the total number of members of the Convocation will amount to 127. The Archbishop will act as President of the Convocation.

The agenda for the Convocation has not been definitely decided upon yet, but among the questions to be settled are a proposal for a new church handbook (order of church services); a proposal for the establishment of a special church office for women; and the question of re-marriage of divorced persons. At the Convocation it will probably be recommended from several sides that women should be allowed to take office in the church on equal footing with men, but it will hardly be possible to obtain a majority of votes in favour of this proposal.

Instruction of Candidates for Confirmation to be Modernized.

The Committee set up by the Finnish Bishops' Conference in 1955 to study the matter of instruction of candidates for confirmation in the Church has now completed its recommendation in which it is suggested, amongst other things, that a new textbook should be provided for the candidates; that more extensive and up-to-date teaching material should be made available; and, finally, that more importance should be attached to keeping in closer contact with the homes during the period of instruction.

Industrial Seminary for Clergymen and Women Divinity Graduates.

In the autumn a special 3-months' "industrial seminary" will be conducted for clergymen and women divinity graduates. The members will be thoroughly instructed in the special problems of an industrialized society and, on this background, the work of the Church under the changed circumstances will be discussed.

The Congregational Campaign Successful, But

The large-scale congregational campaign conducted by the Swedish congregations in Helsinki (Helsingfors) and suburbs at the end of February was successful, in as much as there were 3-4.000 people present every evening at the meetings and church services arranged during the week of campaign, and also on the Sunday there were app. 1.000 communicants. But in a report on the campaign in the Finland-Swedish periodical "Församlingssbladet" it says that the older age groups were predominant while the young people were conspicuous by their absence almost everywhere. Only to a limited degree did one get in touch with new circles, the paper writes. - Altogether 7-8.000 homes were visited by specially trained laymen with invitations to the meetings of the campaign. The Swedish congregations in Helsinki (Helsingfors) number app. 70.000 people.

The Duties of the Church Among the Unemployed Emphasized.

Unemployment has once more become a problem in Finland and in a circular letter the "Förbundet för finskt församlingsarbete" (Society for Finnish Parish Work) reminds both the congregations as well as their relief organs of the special duties which this situation places upon the Church. It is emphasized that the unemployed need both material and spiritual care and the congregations are requested to send their social workers to the special labour sites established for the unemployed. The congregations themselves are also asked to find means of occupation for people struck by unemployment.

In the social sphere the representatives of the Church work in close co-operation with the municipal and state officials.

Professor Alanen on Christian Faith and Biology.

The well-known professor in systematics at the theological faculty in Helsinki (Helsingfors), Yrjö J.E. Alanen, dealt with the relation between Christian faith and modern biology at a theological course for clergymen. Amongst other things, he said:

"Of course there are questions which may cause divergencies between the way of thinking of those well versed in the Scriptures and modern biology such as, for instance, the origin of man; but it is possible that the conflicts on this point will eventually disappear just as they have done in regard to the question of the modern conception of the universe which at one time caused great difficulties for many Christians. In any case it is pure infidelity to imagine that human science should be able to destroy the fundamentals of our faith."

"Only Outward Differences Between Judaism and Christianity".

At a parish meeting in Drumsö at which the Finnish Chief Rabbi, Dr. Weiss, spoke on "Christianity and Judaism" he made some remarkable statements on the relationship between these two. Amongst other things, he said:

"Christianity believes that Messiah has already revealed Himself. We Jews are still awaiting His coming. But in spite of this difference, Jews and Christians are closely related to one another: we believe that neither peace nor rest is yet to be found on earth.

Both Jews and Christians wait and pray - according to our creeds, but, nevertheless, we are in many ways remarkably alike. We are awaiting the Kingdom of God. God's doors are open to all. The Christians need not approach God through Judaism, and neither do the Jews need to come to God through Christianity. We are all of us only poor humans Therefore, the differences existing between Judaism and Christianity are only of an outward nature, in as much as we all possess a common hope for that which we do not know, but have a feeling is approaching. Then all Judaistic and Christian theology will cease to exist: In the prayer "Our Father" we pray: Thy Kingdom come!"

ICELAND

Yet a New Church to be Erected.

During the last few years a number of new churches have been put up in Iceland, and this summer it is hoped to begin the erection of yet another, viz. the church in the rapidly growing town of K pavog, a little south of Reykjavik. The church, which is designed by the State Architect H rdur Bj rnsson, will be situated on the top of a hill so that it may be seen from far off. It will be an equilateral cruciform church of stone with Gothic arches. At the top of the church a big cross will be raised.

It is only since around 1910 that one began to build churches of stone in Iceland. Until then they were built only of wood and up to 1800 peat constituted part of the building materials in all the churches besides wood and stone. To-day only 3 peat churches remain while there are some 200 wooden churches and some 70 stone churches.

NORWAY

Provisional Discussion in Norway About the Decision in Ghana.

At its annual meeting last month the Norwegian Missionary Council, consisting of 26 representatives of 21 different mission societies, discussed the decision in Ghana about the integration of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council. The discussion was conducted on the basis of the report from the Conference by the Secretary General Fr. Birkeli, but the discussion was only provisional as the official statement by the International Missionary Council had not yet been received.

At the meeting the Secretary General Tormod V gen from the Norwegian Lutheran Mission was elected new President of the Missionary Council. The Christian daily in Oslo "V rt land" has asked the new President about his views on the statement by Secretary General Visser 't Hooft that scepticism in regard to such an integration is founded in ignorance about the importance of such a step and that, consequently, an information campaign should be started. To this Tormod V gen replies:

"We are used to having our arguments in such questions overruled. It seems to be a peculiarity of this question that those not in agreement with the decision are not counted with at all. However, the ballot in Ghana was only for information and, moreover, the proposal was modified so that the voting only concerned the fact whether one was in agreement with the principle of the matter."

The new President of the Missionary Council concludes by intimating a possible solution in the case of Norway by mentioning that it will probably be possible to join in the practical collaboration without formal membership.

Discussion About Clergymen Being Members of the School Administration

The draft for a new education Bill drawn up by the Norwegian Government which, amongst other things, abolishes the present rule that the vicar is an ex officio member of the local school board (see CN No. 35), has given rise to a lively discussion. From many sides it is maintained that the Bill must be regarded as a step towards the already far advanced secularization favoured by leading people. Others have pointed out that the vicar is not necessarily the only person in the parish capable of safeguarding Christian interests and that, in cases where both the school authorities and the local government are anti-Christian inclined, it may be questioned whether there is democratic foundation for demanding another point of view to be represented.

In a new leading article the Christian daily in Oslo "Vårt Land" still maintains that the present rule should be preserved as the vicar must be considered an expert with a natural function as a member of the administration of the school whose instruction in Christianity must be regarded as the Baptism teaching of the National Church. According to the provisions in the new Bill the only possibility of clergymen becoming members of the school boards is that they take active part in party politics, something which not many may be expected to be willing to do.

The Norwegian Government Does Not Want to Answer President Horvath.

A member of the Norwegian Lower House, Per Lønning, D.D., Oslo, put the question to the Minister of Church Affairs whether the Government proposed to protest against the parallels drawn by the leader of the Hungarian Government's Office for Church Affairs, President János Horvath, in his letter to the Northern Bishops between the treatment of the Lutheran bishops by the Hungarian Government and the appointment of bishops by the Norwegian Government. As mentioned in CN No. 34 Horvath drew attention to the appointment of Kåre Støylen as Bishop of Agder as an example of how the State appointed the bishops "at will", in as much as Kåre Støylen was only No. 5 at the voting taking place prior to the appointment.

As may be seen from page 2 the Northern Bishops in their reply to Horvath have only stressed the point that the appointment was within the boundaries of the Church Order and that Støylen was recommended by the majority of the Bishops; but Per Lønning felt that it would be natural if the Norwegian Government, who is responsible for the appointment, made a more detailed statement.

However, at a later sitting of the House the Minister of Church Affairs, Birger Bergersen, replied that the Norwegian Government did not intend to make a statement on the matter.

Revival on the Hospital Ships of the Mission to Seamen.

The Norwegian Mission to Seamen owns two hospital ships which accompany the Norwegian fishing fleet on its cruises in the North Sea during the big fishing seasons. On board the hospital ships there is a lively activity of meetings and mental and spiritual care. The Secretary General of the Mission, O. Dahl-Goli, reports that there have been gratifying revivals at the beginning of the season on board both the ships. These are called "Elieser IV" and "Elieser V" and have been stationed at Florø and Nåløy. The former followed the fishing fleet on its way south in pursuit of the shoals of fishes heading that way while the latter went north to Lofoten in order to be at hand when the big Lofoten fishing season opened. Here, too, the Dutch church and hospital ship "De Hoop" came to assistance. It is owned by the Netherlands Association for Help to Seamen of All Nationalities.

Two Large Scale Evangelical Campaigns.

In a great number of parishes in the West Telemark and Drammen evangelization campaigns have taken place during March. The one in West Telemark took place from March 4th - 9th and the one in Drammen and surrounding parishes from March 16th - 23rd. In both places the campaigns were thoroughly prepared in prayer groups and through a visiting service as well as through advertising and printed pamphlets.

SWEDEN

Swedish Parliament Has Accepted Women Pastors.

The Swedish Parliament has passed a Bill according to which Holy Orders shall be open to women from January 1st, 1959. The Bill, however, must be passed also by the Church Convocation before it can become a Law. The Convocation is said to be convened in the autumn of this year.

Proposal for Greater Representation of Laymen in the Church Convocation.

Two members of the Liberal People's Party have proposed in the Lower House in Parliament that the present rules for the composition of the Church Convocation should be altered so that the lay representation is increased in proportion to that of the clergy. The Convocation is the supreme organ of the Lutheran National Church in matters of legislation and internal affairs. At the moment it consists of 43 clergymen and 57 laymen, but in consideration of the growing influence of the laity in the Church, a trend which is desirable from many points of view, the two proposers feel that the lay representation in the Church Convocation ought also to be increased. At the same time it is proposed that the possibility of direct election of the lay representatives should be taken up for

renewed consideration. According to the present provisions the election is indirect.

As a reason for the proposal it is pointed out that in the present church political situation, when a number of important decisions are to be taken, it is of the greatest importance that the Parliamentary organ of the Church is composed in such a way that it gives the best possible picture of the religious life of the Church and the differences of opinion in the congregations.

Swedish Free Church Conference on Relations With the State.

518 representatives of 8 different free church communities in Sweden met in Stockholm for the 9th Free Church Conference from March 11th - 13th. Among the many subjects dealt with the most interesting was the question of the relationship with the state. In a resolution from the Conference it says that "the system of a state church is foreign to the New Testament's view on the Christian congregation" and that "furthermore, state influence on the church is not beneficial from a religious point of view and hazardous from a practical point of view". As regards the investigation of the relationship between the State and the Church which is to be conducted by a Commission set up by the Government, it says in the resolution that a possible severance of the ties between the State and the Lutheran National Church must be done in such financial terms as to be acceptable to the Church and under such conditions that the National Church as well as the other religious communities are given the best working opportunities for strengthening the position of the Christian faith in Sweden.

Another resolution from the Free Church Conference advocated that at the big hospitals positions as hospital chaplains should be established which should be filled according to qualifications regardless of whether the applicant belonged to the National Church or a Free Church, and that a co-ordinating organ between the Free Churches and the National Church should be established at all the hospitals. It was, moreover, advocated that a more simple procedure in connection with resignations from the National Church should be introduced, that Free Church ministers should be given wider access to perform marriages with civil validity, and that renewed efforts should be made to obtain taxation relief on donations for religious or ideal purposes.

Among the communities represented at the Conference were the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church and the Mission Covenant Church. The Pentecost Mission and the Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen that are not members of the Joint Committee of the Free Churches which arranges these Free Church Conferences had sent observers to the Conference. Also a number of guests invited from the free churches in the other Northern countries took part in the Conference.

The Conference was prepared through three books on "The State and the Churches", "Christian Work Amongst Young People in a New School Situation" and "Evangelization Through Education".

German Ecumenical Archives Returned After "Wintering" in Sweden.

Shortly before the outbreak of War in 1939 extensive German church archives were secretly brought to Sweden so that the Gestapo should not get hold of them. They will now be returned to Germany

where they are to form the basic part of a newly established ecumenical archives in Soest, Westphalia.

It is the large archives collected by Professor F. Siegmund-Schultze right from the beginning of the First World War which includes, amongst other things, interesting material for throwing light upon the history of the ecumenical movement, first and foremost in connection with the movement World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship Through the Churches. Professor Siegmund-Schultze who took a leading part in the efforts of the churches to promote peace - amongst other things, through "underground" contacts between England and Germany during the First World War - was quite aware that the Gestapo would be very interested in laying hand on the material and consequently he deposited it with the Swedish Minister in Berlin as early as 1933. When a new World War was approaching in 1939 the whole archives were sent to Stockholm at the request of Professor Siegmund-Schultze - officially it was furniture which the then Swedish pastor in Berlin, Rev. Birger Forell, wished to have sent to his home country - and since 1946 it has been kept in the basement of the University Library at Uppsala. Only a small part of it has been used for historical scientific research, as for instance by the Swedish Dean Nils Karlström for his thesis upon "The Efforts of the Church for Understanding During the World Conflict 1914-1918". The rest of it will now probably be catalogued and examined in the new archives in Soest.

International Christian Conferences in Sweden.

From May 29th to June 2nd a European church radio conference will be held in Stockholm with participants from a number of countries, especially Germany, England, Switzerland and the Northern countries. The Conference is arranged by the European section of the World Committee for Christian Broadcasting in collaboration with the radio committees of the Swedish Lutheran National Church and the Swedish Free Churches. Among the questions to be debated at the Conference are the relationship between transmissions of public church services and broadcasting of special services in studios; the employment of religious music; the spiritual care of souls by the radio church; and the possibility of increasing Scripture knowledge through the radio.

From July 23rd to August 1st the 25 members of the European section of the Faith and Order Commission will meet for a conference on "Christ and His Church" at Lund whose Bishop, Anders Nygren, is the Chairman of the Section.

At Uppsala a European rally for boys' church choirs from a number of countries, amongst others Germany, England, Holland, France and the Northern countries, will be held during the week after Easter.

The School Authorities Turn Down Attacks on Morning Prayers.

In a statement to the Government the Swedish Supreme School Board has turned down the proposals concerning morning prayers in the schools which were put forward recently by two pupils' organizations. One of them had suggested that morning prayers should be abolished altogether or made completely voluntary as the present

